



Link 6. Echinacea angustifolia Harvesting and Tribal Sovereignty

Mid-1990s - Harvesting of *Echinacea angustifolia* root increases in the mid-1990s. It spreads northward from historical harvesting areas in Kansas to the untouched native stands in eastern Montana and western North Dakota. Harvesting increases with market demands in 1997 and 1998. The Fort Peck Reservation in northeast Montana becomes to focus of this expansion of commercial markets.

Photo credit: Robyn Klein

1995 - Companies approach the tribes on the Turtle Mountain and Fort Berthold Reservations in North Dakota and the Fort Peck Reservation in northeast Montana, and offer money for *Echinacea* roots.

1998 - University of Montana Master's Thesis by Monique Kathleen Kolster: Impacts of the global *Echinacea* market on the people and land of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation.

In the spring of 1998, over 350 to 400 people were harvesting *Echinacea* on the Fort Peck Reservation. The headlights of pickup trucks were used at night so that the last remaining seed heads could easily be seen.

No one is allowed to dig plants on Montana Indian Reservations without permission. Taking anything from an Indian Reservation without permission is against tribal laws.

The Fort Peck Indian Reservation covers parts of four counties: Roosevelt, Valley, Daniels, and Sheridan. *Echinacea angustifolia* is mostly found in only two of those counties: Roosevelt and Sheridan.

Sometimes, herbal medicine knowledge among tribes in Montana remains closely guarded. The information often resides only with people that hold a special position such as a spiritual leader.

For some tribes, herb information is being documented. For example, on the Salish/Kootenai Reservation, medicinal plant information has been published in a book...written in Salish. This book is not available to the general non-Indian public. And you would not know how to read it unless you knew the Salish language.

Today, it is suspected that some of the herbal medicine knowledge among Montana tribes is being forgotten. Sometimes young people are not interested. It takes a lot of work and dedication to learn the prayers, songs and information about medicinal plants. It takes someone who really wants to take the ownership and responsibility that comes with having that kind of knowledge.

Price and Kindscher discovered on Fort Peck that the most experienced harvesters have great respect for harvesting sustainably. Digging *Echinacea* root is part of their livelihood and they do not want to destroy it. For more information read their articles at:

<http://kindscher.faculty.ku.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Price-Kindscher-2007-One-Hundred-Years.pdf>

<http://kindscher.faculty.ku.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Kindscher-2008-Resprouting-of-Edhinacea-angust.pdf>

Photo credit: Robyn Klein

In her Master's thesis on the harvesting of *Echinacea* on the Fort Peck Reservation, Monique Kolster describes the tribal conflicts that resulted. Many thought it was a good thing that brought families together. Others complained of trespassers digging on their land and leaving holes and trash. Elders were concerned about digging with respect. Your librarian can help you check her thesis out from the University of Montana: <http://www.worldcat.org/title/impacts-of-the-global-echinacea-market-on-the-people-and-land-of-the-fort-peck-assiniboine-and-sioux-reservation/oclc/42068906>